THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) Government is aware of the increase in prices of some essential commodities. During the current year, prices of most essential commodities have remained within reasonable levels. Retail prices of wheat remained steady at Rs. 13 per kg in Delhi for the past 3 months. Prices of onion are ruling low as compared to last year. Prices of edible oils have declined. Some price increase is recorded mainly in rice and pulses (except gram dal).

(b) Government has taken effective steps to bridge the gap between demand and supply of essential commodities and stabilize prices as highlighted below:

(i) Government has procured a record 50 million tonnes of foodgrains this year and has also decided to create a Strategic Reserve of 5 million tonnes of foodgrains, out of the domestic procurement. This is in addition to the buffer stock held by FCI every year.

(ii) Reducing import duties to zero - for rice, wheat, pulses, edible oils (crude) and maize and butter and ghee;

(iii) Reducing import duties on refined and hydrogenated oils and vegetable oils to 7.5%;

(iv) Banning export of non-basmati rice, wheat, edible oils (except castor oil, coconut oil and oils produced from minor forest produce, except sesame oil) and pulses (except kabuli chana);

(v) Imposition of stock limit orders in the case of rice, wheat, pulses, edible oils and oilseeds;

(vi) Maintaining the Central Issue Price (CIP) for rice (at Rs 5.65 per kg for BPL and Rs 3 per kg for AAY) and wheat (at Rs 4.15 per kg for BPL and Rs 2 per kg for AAY) since 2002;

(vii) Government launched a scheme on 28.07.2008 to distribute one million tons of edible oils to States/UTs at a subsidy @ Rs.15/kg.

(c) Essential commodities like wheat, onion and oil etc. are marketed in retail stores throughout the country. In addition, to check inflationary trends during festival season, Government has released 9 lakh tonnes of wheat in September 2008 under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) (Domestic) to States/UTs for September and October 2008 for distribution to retail consumers and another 8.40 lakh tonnes of wheat in October 2008 for sale to bulk consumers in States/UTs for October and November 2008.

(d) Does not arise.

Quota of foodgrains to Andaman & Nicobar Islands

818. SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has curtailed the annual quota of rice and wheat for the APL families in Andaman and Nicobar Islands from 28200 metric tonnes to 17268 metric tonnes and from 8100 metric tonnes to 2964 metric tonnes respectively;

(b) whether his Ministry is aware that PDS rice and wheat and Tsunami relief rice quantity has been drastically reduced; and

(c) if so, whether his Ministry would take initiative to improve and increase the monthly quota of rice and wheat for APL families in Andaman and Nicobar Islands as quickly as possible?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (c) The details of monthly allocation of foodgrains (rice and wheat) made under the APL category to A&N Islands since June, 2006 onwards are as under:

(In tons)

Commodity	(April, 2006)	Existing Allocation (June, 2006 Onwards)
Rice	1439	1439
Wheat	416	247
TOTAL :	1855	1686

The allocation of foodgrains including rice under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is made to all States/UTs for Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya (AAY) families on the basis of 1993-94 poverty estimates of the Planning Commission projected on the population estimates of Registrar General of India as on 1.3.2000 or the number of families actually identified and ration cards issued by each State/UT, *whichever is less.* Allocations of foodgrains for BPL and AAY categories are made @ 35 kg per family per month for all accepted numbers of families in Andaman and Nicobar Islands as per this norm.

Allocations of foodgrains for the APL category were made in larger quantities during earlier period to liquidate surplus stocks available in the Central Pool. Keeping in view the declining stocks position of foodgrains in the Central Pool from 2006-07, the allocation of wheat and rice under TPDS to States/UTs for the APL category have been rationalized with effect from June, 2006 and April, 2007 respectively, on the basis of offtake figures for the previous 3 years *i.e.* 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06. However, there has been no curtailment/reduction of rice allocation under APL category for the UT of A&N Islands.

With a view to augment availability of foodgrains, keep rise in prices under check, keeping in view request of the UT Administration and improving availability of foodgrains, the Government has made the following adhoc additional allocations to the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- **Adhoc additional allocation** of 1,500 tons of wheat at APL rate for the period September, 2006 to March 2007, 2048 tons of wheat at APL rate during 2007-08 and 1219 tons of wheat at APL rate for the period September to December 2008.
- An additional allocation of 5000 tons of **rice at economic cost** has been made to the Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands in September 2008.
- In order to check inflationary trends during festival season 2008, a quantity of 5,000 tons of wheat has also been released **under Open Market Sale Scheme** for sale to retail consumers during September and October 2008.

Thus, presently the UT of A&N Islands is being made total allocation of 2036 tons of foodgrains under TPDS for APL category per month *i.e.* 1439 tons rice +247 tons normal wheat +350 tons adhoc additional wheat.

The Ministry of Rural Development had sanctioned 7500 MTs of rice to A&N Islands for Tsunami relief under Special Component of Sampoorna Gramin Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) in June 2005 for creation of additional wage employment in the Tsunami affected Districts of Union Territory. This quantity has been lifted by the Andaman & Nicobar Islands Administration. However, with implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in all Districts from April 2008, SGRY is not operational.

Global wheat stocks

819. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that global wheat stocks were down to 107 million metric tonnes in 2007 compared with over 197 million metric tonnes in 2001;

(b) if so, what was India's wheat stock in 2001 and in 2007;

(c) what quantity of wheat was imported to avoid shortage of wheat for our consumers during the last five years; and

(d) what long-term steps have been taken with global dwindling growth in wheat crops, impacting imports quantity-wise and cost-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) As per information received from the F.A.O., the Global wheat stocks at the end of 2007-08 is estimated at 147.5 million tons as against 243.7 million tons during 2000-01.

(b) The wheat stocks in Central Pool as on 1.7.2001 and 1.7.2007 were as under:

(million tons)

1.7.2001	1.7.2007
38.9	12.9

(c) The quantity of wheat imported during last five years is as under:-

(million tons)

Year	Quantity
2003-2004	Nil
2004-2005	Nil
2005-2006	Nil
2006-2007	5.38
2007-2008	1.87

(d) Government has taken the following steps to increase production of wheat in the country and to control rise in prices of wheat:

(i) A Centrally sponsored scheme named National Food Security Mission has been launched in selected districts so as to increase the production of wheat in the